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General Assembly

Seventy-second session

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22nd plenary meeting
Saturday, 23 September 2017, 6 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

The meeting was called to order at 6.15 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I call on His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Yacoubou, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, African Integration and Nigeriens Abroad of the Republic of the Niger.

Mr. Yacoubou (Niger) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to extend my sincere congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, as well as my best wishes for your success. I would also like to congratulate the new Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, and wish him every success in his mission. The Niger assures him of its full support.

The present session is taking place in a specific context, marked by the deterioration of the security situation in some Member States and, recently, by the destruction caused by hurricanes in others. To those affected countries, I would like to reiterate our solidarity and compassion. For those who have the flaw of forgetting or neglecting nature, it has reminded us that often it can be indomitable and has shown us that climate change can at times bring disaster and irremediable losses. We must therefore be aware and resolute in our conviction that new norms of production and consumption are being imposed on us.

The Niger is aware that each country is responsible for its own development and each person for his own destiny. However, the most vulnerable countries — I am speaking of the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States — deserve the support and assistance of the more affluent nations. Cooperation and solidarity are essential pillars of our common Organization. It is an original commitment of all Member States to work together so that all peoples can attain a decent standard of living.

That is why, while recognizing some positive developments, it is important for the States Members of the United Nations to make a greater commitment to partnership and cooperation in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and to combat inequalities among and within States. In that connection, the Niger stresses the imperative need for effective mobilization of the resources needed to finance development, in accordance with the Addis Ababa Action Plan.

For its part, and to give meaning to the Niger people's struggle for prosperity and shared progress, the Government of the Niger has successfully carried out the Economic and Social Development Plan 2012-2015 and has just adopted a second plan for 2017 to 2021. That plan takes into account the main trends of the Renaissance Programme Act 2 of His Excellency Mr. Mahamadou Issoufou, President of the Republic of the Niger, and of the Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth Strategy, Niger 2035. It was designed to continue and amplify the Government's efforts to face the immense challenges to our development. It is an expression of our determination to improve, substantially

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and sustainably, the basic social indicators, guarantee universal rights, realize food self-sufficiency, protect the environment, build strong democratic institutions, defend the integrity of our territory and ensure the security of goods and people throughout the national territory. It also takes into account the main features of the African Union's Agenda 2063 and those of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Very opportunely, that plan will be presented to the Niger's technical and financial partners at a donor round table in Paris from 11 to 13 December 2017, under the patronage of the President of the Republic of the Niger. The Niger will mobilize to produce the maximum amount of internal resources to finance the plan, but it also knows it can count on the active solidarity of its development partners. I therefore appeal to States and the private sector that believe in our potential to be a partner in that project.

I have just mentioned our development challenges and our responses to them. But our country and all the countries of the Sahel face significant security challenges. In reality, they are strategic threats that may even jeopardize the existence of our States. The Niger is facing three hotbeds of threats.

The first is related to the situation in Libya. Without a Government exercising control over the whole territory, with dozens of militias, terrorist groups and all kinds of traffickers and a process in difficulty, the situation is of concern not only for the Libyans but also for neighbouring countries such as the Niger. Because of the uncontrolled movement of arms of all calibres, armed groups have become direct threats to both the Libyan people and neighbouring countries. Until that country is stabilized, we will have no guarantee that the Sahelo-Saharan space will not continue to face violent upheavals.

The Niger calls on the entire international community to genuinely commit to the restoration of a democratic order in Libya. The Niger has only one agenda in Libya — peace. That is why we believe that we must already be supporting the process of revising the Libyan Political Agreement. We call on all parties to make every effort to ensure that the Libyans themselves are masters of their political destiny; that reconciliation is inclusive and excludes groups terrorists; that the army is unified and national; that militias are disarmed and terrorist groups neutralized; and, lastly, that the referendum and electoral process is undertaken on the basis of a new constitution and consensual electoral laws.

The second threat that we face is linked to ongoing presence of Boko Haram in the Lake Chad basin. For more than two years, in synergy with Cameroon, Chad and Nigeria, we have been fighting hard against the terrorist group Boko Haram. That barbarous group, which has claimed several thousand victims, is today considered one of the most cruel of recent years.

Thanks to the Multinational Joint Task Force, we have gained meaningful victories and fear has changed sides. Today we have considerably reduced the offensive and harmful capacities of Boko Haram. It is no longer possible for that criminal organization to control and administer, as it did so easily before, any locality in any one of our countries. However, even though they are weakened and wandering, elements of Boko Haram still remain dangerous. They organize suicide attacks by young girls forced to become human bombs or sex slaves, and engage in racketeering and kidnappings. In that connection, I wish to recall the 39 women and children abducted last July in the Niger by the terrorist group Boko Haram. The Government of the Niger remains strongly engaged and mobilized until their liberation.

The third threat, and by far the most worrying for us, is the situation in northern Mali. We must resolve two questions there. The first concerns the implementation of the Algiers peace agreements, and the second concerns fight against terrorist groups and traffickers.

From our point of view, the most important of those two issues is the fight against terrorist groups and traffickers. Until they are defeated, it will be difficult to implement the peace agreements or to hope for the restoration of the authority of the Malian State throughout its national territory. Therefore our primary objective is the eradication of those groups and the destruction of all trafficking that has become the source of their financing. That is why the member countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) decided to set up a joint armed force.

Despite the commitment and determination of the G-5 Sahel member States, we remain deeply concerned by the weak mobilization of the international community to make that force operational. The Niger is convinced that the force will make it possible to impose the conditions for an irreversible balance of power in favour of peace and stability in Mali and therefore

throughout the Sahel. I therefore call for a real start so that we can make the necessary decisions. The Niger calls on the Security Council to adopt a new resolution that foresees a commitment of our forces under Chapter VII and to provide a mechanism for predictable and sustainable financing. Moreover, it is simply a matter of reorienting existing resources to enable the force to achieve its objectives.

What is at stake in the Sahel is a fight not only for the peace and security of the region, but also for international peace and security. Failing to help the G-5 Sahel and leaving the situation in Mali to deteriorate even further would be a mistake that the Member States should not commit. I would therefore like to thank all partners who already have announced their contribution to the operationalization of the G-5 Sahel joint force. The Niger welcomes the recent consultations undertaken by the Secretary-General and encourages him to continue his efforts to enable the deployment of the force.

With regard to peacekeeping operations, is it not time for the United Nations to question their effectiveness and to learn lessons from the shortcomings and failures observed here and there? Indeed, the nature of and actors in those conflicts have changed. We are dealing with non-State actors resorting to asymmetric actions for which peacekeeping missions are neither adapted nor prepared. That is why the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali has become one of the deadliest United Nations missions today. This it is important to review those missions with regard to their composition, their armaments and, especially, their mandate.

In discussing the issue of terrorism and the determined fight that our defence and security forces are waging, I would like to say here that the Niger will remain eternally grateful for the sacrifice of its daughters and sons who, with courage and honour, are fighting to preserve and safeguard the integrity of our country. We are certainly paying a heavy price for this fight, but the Niger will continue to play its role and live up to its duty to ensure that never again will any terrorist or criminal organization be able to occupy or take control of any part of our territory. That is why the Government will not stint on its considerable efforts to ensure that our forces take control and that their capacities are boosted. We will never let up in our determination, and I know we will win this war because our cause is noble.

Every year thousands of migrants throughout the world put themselves in danger to seek a better life, and the deserts and oceans of the world have become open-air cemeteries. Irregular migrants, victims of criminal smugglers with neither faith nor law, should be protected. The Niger, essentially a transit country, reaffirms its determination to fight the irregular migration networks and will continue to do everything possible to attack the root causes of such migration. That is the meaning of the plan that our country presented at the European Union-African Union Valletta Summit on Migration.

I have mentioned the security situation in western and eastern Niger. I would like to recall here that as a result of those conflicts, our country, although among the poorest in the world, is hosting more than 200,000 refugees, internally displaced persons and returnees. For the Niger, what is most important today is to get past those emergencies so as to launch socioeconomic recovery in the areas affected by those conflicts. We need to move from humanitarian issues to development.

Turning to certain international issues, I recall that the Niger is in solidarity with the struggle of the Palestinian people for freedom and independence. Our position remains unswerving support for the just and definitive resolution of that question, guaranteeing the creation of a sovereign State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The abuses against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar are unacceptable. Such serious and massive violations of human rights must be punished. The Niger unequivocally condemns those atrocities.

The Niger, a State party to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, will respect its commitments. We are convinced that there is no alternative for saving our planet and especially for preserving it for future generations. The Paris Agreement is not only the realization of our awareness, but also proof of our shared responsibility before history. Taking a step backward is not possible unless one believes that the fate of the Earth and of humankind is not concern for everybody.

The Niger urges the United States of America and Cuba to persevere in the constructive dialogue that had begun between the two countries until relations between the two are normalized and the embargo is fully lifted.

The issue of disarmament is a crucial. It deserves special attention to enhance trust among States. The

Niger strongly supports the actions undertaken by the United Nations with a view to bringing about general and complete disarmament with regard to both weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons.

The new challenges generated by globalization, the transformations that have affected international relations for decades and the need to take into account new geopolitical dimensions, particularly in regard to Africa, require that we deal with the crucial issue of the reform of United Nations organs. In accordance with the Ezulwini Consensus, Niger calls for the composition of the Security Council to be reviewed, for the General Assembly to be revitalized and for the United Nations to remain a democratic Organization that enshrines the sovereign equality of States, not a tiered organization in which the powerful and the weak have different rights.

To conclude my remarks before the Assembly, I would like to reaffirm that at every opportunity and before every challenge, my country, the Niger, will always rise to play its proper role to promote and defend peace, to eradicate poverty and inequality and to preserve our environment. We are fully aware of our responsibilities to change our own fate and contribute to making the world safe and better. We assume these responsibilities fully and in a determined manner.

May God bless the Niger and the United Nations.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Elvin Nimrod, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Legal Affairs, Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs and Local Government of Grenada.

Mr. Nimrod (Grenada): I bring warmest greetings from Grenada's Prime Minister, the Honourable Keith Mitchell. Prime Minister Mitchell sincerely believes in the work of the General Assembly and is absent only because he believes that, as Chairman of the Caribbean Community, his presence in the region allows his colleague Prime Ministers to travel to New York to plead the cases of their hurricane-stricken countries.

Our hearts and prayers go out to all the victims in our Caribbean region, in Mexico and across the world who are presently suffering the adverse effects of climate change and natural disasters. Within the last few weeks, our fellow members of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States and the Caribbean small States of Barbuda and the Commonwealth of Dominica were ravaged by hurricanes Irma and Maria, which caused near-total destruction and the loss of many lives. Our hearts also go out to the people of Cuba, with whom our region shares a very special friendship. I implore the international community to recognize without delay our responsibility to assist all those affected by natural disasters.

I join those before me in congratulating you, Mr. President, on your election as President of this international organ. I am confident in your stewardship and assure you of my delegation's cooperation and support. I also take this opportunity to commend your predecessor, Ambassador Peter Thomson of Fiji, for his able stewardship of the Assembly's seventy-first session.

I also wish to thank both you and Secretary-General Guterres for your leadership and willingness to serve as guardians of the spirit of our Charter of the United Nations. I believe there is value in repeating your astute and entirely relevant observation that the Charter makes only five references to war, while peace is referenced 47 times.

Over the next few minutes, I will endeavour to offer Grenada's interpretation of what it means to strive for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet, the theme for this session.

I would like to say a few words on climate change. I am sure that almost every speaker here mentioned something about climate change, because, as we all know, it is a very relevant and topical subject. Certainly, based on recent activities in the Atlantic, we just cannot dispute that the climate is changing. In fact, 97 per cent of actively publishing climate scientists agree that climate change is due to human activities. For those who question the veracity of that science, the cluster of extreme weather events over the past few years ought to suffice for sounding the alarm.

Extreme weather events disproportionately affect our planet's most vulnerable, such as women, children and the elderly. Therefore, Grenada advocates that special attention be paid to those groups. As we assess the physical damage caused by such disasters, let us never forget the psychological toll they take take on survivors.

We reiterate Grenada's commitment to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Speaking in his capacity as Chair of the World Bank's Small States Forum in June, Grenada's Prime Minister lamented the withdrawal of key partners from the Agreement.

Therefore, we encourage them to reconsider. The Government of Grenada has adopted an ambitious Blue Growth agenda to take advantage of our vast maritime territory and its countless resources. Grenada aims to be the beacon of sustainable development for maritime States around the world. Our relatively small size makes it an interesting and achievable project. Our Blue Growth master plan offers many opportunities for collaboration.

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) has emphasized the need to advance measures to develop sustainable ocean-based economies in the Caribbean. The word "Caribbean" reminds us of beautiful beaches, such as the world-famous Grand Anse beach in Grenada. Our recent endeavours aim to use our maritime waters in a sustainable manner, governed by robust policies in our people's interest.

I previously alluded to the many variables that influence the sustainability of our planet. Small States such as Grenada and other CARICOM countries have to battle to maintain our access to financial markets. In March, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) published a report titled, "Recent trends in correspondent banking relationships", which highlights some of the challenges facing the financial institutions and Governments of small States. Observing that the number of correspondent banking relationships has decreased, the IMF anticipates a negative effect on global trade and economic activity this year. Furthermore, in the specific cases of Grenada and the rest of CARICOM, the high cost of compliance with the international tax agenda was underscored at the Ninth General Meeting between the United Nations system and the Caribbean Community in July.

Added to the threat of lost correspondent banking relationships, we also have to deal with the unilateral and often unfounded blacklisting of our institutions as money launderers and tax havens. Grenada has worked tirelessly to sign tax information exchange agreements and has signed 14 of those agreements since 2010. It pains us as policy-makers when we expend our limited resources to comply with rules, only to face unjust consequences when we are quite evidently in compliance. There are no easy answers to those challenges, but I urge our partners to desist from draconian approaches to such matters when dealing with vulnerable small developing States such as ours.

Grenada also supports resolution 70/5, which calls for an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed on Cuba. We also believe that renewed dialogue may augur well for the discovery of a mutually acceptable solution for both parties.

Lastly, on finance, I am proud to report that Grenada's structural adjustment programme has been highly commended locally, regionally and internationally. In May, the IMF reported that

> "Grenada has continued with steadfast implementation of reforms and made progress toward achieving the key program goals."

Through the leadership and wisdom of our Prime Minister and the sacrifices of the Grenadian people, Grenada's economy is on solid footing today. Grenada's thriving economy is proof that the structural adjustments are not inherently bad. Investment, both foreign and local, is at its highest levels in recent years. Although we are cautious to declare victory, we are very confident that we are headed in the right direction.

Grenada believes that all 7 billion of our planet's humans are entitled to certain fundamental human rights. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights is unambiguous. We should all be guided by article 1 of the Declaration, which states that all humans are born free and equal.

On the issue of international security, Grenada continues to work with our international partners in the interest of world peace. Grenada is active and compliant numerous matters of international security. Grenada views the situation on the Korean peninsula with great trepidation and the hope that the conflict will be resolved peacefully. The proliferation of nuclear weapons is inherently destructive and serves no useful purpose for humankind. Therefore, Grenada urges its friends and allies to desist from all development and testing of such weapons. Each year, $105 billion are spent on developing nuclear weapons. That amounts to around $12 million per hour. If we are willing to make the shift from destruction to construction, the people of Barbuda, Dominica, Cuba, Mexico and other countries suffering from recent disasters will be forever grateful to the world.

Grenada remains concerned by recent political and social developments in Venezuela. In his capacity as Chair of CARICOM, Grenada's Prime Minister has offered CARICOM's help in facilitation of dialogue

between the Government and the opposition in Venezuela. CARICOM's approach must necessarily be impartial. CARICOM will not attempt to dictate terms to either side. We seek to encourage meaningful dialogue on the premise that the Venezuelan people can come together to safeguard the future of all of Venezuela. In the meantime, Grenada believes in the art of diplomacy and the principle of respect for sovereignty.

Turning to matters of health, the year 2017 marks the tenth anniversary of the landmark signing by CARICOM Heads of Government of the Port of Spain Declaration on non-communicable diseases (NCDs). While some progress has been made in reducing NCDs, there is still much work left to be done. The Caribbean region has the highest burden of non-communicable diseases in the Americas. Therefore, we urge key allies to continue to partner with us as we attempt to correct that unfortunate reality.

Grenada has made important progress in controlling the spread of HIV/AIDS. Only 0.3 per cent of our population presently lives with the disease. The work of Grenada's National Infectious Disease Control Unit and our health-care practitioners and policymakers must be highly commended for their work in that regard. That work, however, is greatly supported by international assistance that is being depleted — as it already has been in some Caribbean countries — without foreseeable replenishment.

Grenada thanks the Global Fund, the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the Pan American Health Organization and the German Development Bank for their assistance. I urge donors to be flexible in their relief responses. We cannot wait for data while our people suffer. The data will come eventually, but in the meantime, lives, families and communities are at stake.

I would like to close with the assurance that Grenada believes in the United Nations system. I have had the honour of representing the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique on several occasions at this noble institution. As I retire from active political life, I am very optimistic that the window is still open for us to leave a peaceful, habitable and prosperous planet for future generations. The challenges of our time are dynamic and continuous, and we would be remiss to put anything but our planet first.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Augustine Phillip Mahiga, Minister for Foreign Affairs, East Africa, Regional and International Cooperation of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mr. Mahiga (United Republic of Tanzania): I congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to preside over deliberations of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. My delegation pledges full support to you and your Bureau.

Allow me to convey warm fraternal greetings from His Excellency Mr. John Pombe Joseph Magufuli, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, who wished to be here but, due to other pressing commitments at home, is unable to attend this session of the Assembly. President Magufuli has sent me to assure the Assembly that his Government will continue to support the United Nations and its noble mandate to promote global peace, security, freedom and development. We also wish to extend Tanzania's unwavering support and cooperation to the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, as he continues to discharge his duties.

My delegation pays tribute to your predecessor, Mr. President — His Excellency Ambassador Peter Thomson — for his exemplary leadership during the Assembly's seventy-first session. His tireless efforts in promoting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as his dedication to resolving the plight of refugees and migrants and reviving consultations on the reforms of the United Nations, particularly of the Security Council, will remain part of his legacy. We are confident that you and your team will advance from where he left off, as you pledged in your opening statement (see A/72/PV.1).

Today, the world is facing myriad challenges, which include new and old threats such as international terrorism and other international crimes, persistent poverty, hunger and climate change, as well as global inequalities in economic and social status among nations. Those challenges call for a common and urgent response by the entire United Nations system and the international community as a whole.

It is in that regard that my delegation welcomes the theme for this session "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet". The theme is timely and welcomed, as most of our countries are adjusting their development strategies and plans to ensure the speedy and timely implementation of the Goals and targets enshrined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet should

focus on ending poverty, promoting economic and social prosperity, addressing inequality and injustices, and tackling the adverse impacts of climate change. That can be achieved by successfully implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Cognizant of that fact, Tanzania has integrated the Sustainable Development Goals into the second phase of our five-year development plan for 2016 to 2021, which focuses on industrialization, on the basis of complementarity between the agricultural and industrial sectors. That plan is one of our tools for the realization of our National Development Vision 2025, which seeks to bring our country to middle-income status. In collaboration with our development partners and other stakeholders, we have developed frameworks for implementing the SDGs, which include communication and dissemination strategies on the SDGs to make the Goals understandable to everyone. Dissemination is in both English and Kiswahili, which is our national language, spoken by all Tanzanians. Sensitization workshops on SDGs are also being conducted for regional administrations and local Government authorities, so that the Goals can be mainstreamed in their local plans and budgets in order to directly involve and benefit ordinary people, who are the main focus of the 2030 Agenda.

Tanzania has set a target growth from an average of 7 per cent in 2015 to 10 per cent by 2020, in order to reach middle-income status by 2025. We also believe that such growth will encourage efforts to promote equality in society by reducing the unemployment rate from the current 10.3 per cent to 8 per cent and will also reduce the proportion of population below the poverty line. That growth can be achieved by, among other things, increasing employment in both rural and urban areas and providing financial support through soft loans to youth and women. Other measures include strengthening small and medium enterprises, securing fair taxation and fiscal regimes for business entities and restoring discipline and accountability. Fighting corruption, financial discipline and accountability in all sectors are the hallmarks of President Magufuli's Government.

Climate change has become an existential challenge to the entire planet Earth. All parts of the world are increasingly experiencing the adverse impact of climate change, manifested in persistent droughts, land degradation, coastal erosion, ocean temperature rise and extreme weather patterns such as cyclones, typhoons, hurricanes and floods. In Tanzania, for instance, it is disheartening to witness the epic snows and glaciers of Kilimanjaro — the highest mountain in Africa — melting at an alarming rate.

Against that background, I would like to express my Government's heartfelt sympathies and condolences to our brothers and sisters in the Caribbean, South Asia, Mexico, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, the United States of America and all around the world who have recently been victims of the disastrous impact of climate change. Our thoughts and prayers are with those who have lost their lives and those who have been dispossessed and displaced. For all of us, this should be a wake-up call and a reminder that climate change has no boundaries and can potentially wipe out economic and development achievements in the blink of an eye. Therefore, the sooner we act, the better chances we have to protect the planet Earth for the present and future generations.

It is fortunate that we have the Paris Agreement, which already entered into force in November 2016, to address this problem. To honour our joint efforts that gave birth to the Paris Agreement under the leadership of France, we should implement, in letter and spirit, all of its articles. Assistance to developing countries should go beyond mere mitigation measures and should target adaptation measures with built-in green technologies to control carbon emissions from the outset.

Violent conflicts continue to plague the world and to challenge the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, which has the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. They claim thousands of lives and lead to massive displacements and flights of people in search of safer places. We need to invest more in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and mediation efforts by addressing the root causes, the precipitating and triggering factors of conflicts. Peacekeeping, peacebuilding and State-building are essential to the maintenance and consolidation of peace where peace has been secured. We commend the role of the United Nations in spearheading those peace initiatives.

Striving for peace should be a collective endeavour involving Governments, international organizations, regional blocs, non-State actors, religious groups, civil societies and individuals. Sustainable peace and security is prerequisite for the achievement of sustainable development. In that regard, we commend our men and women in Blue Helmets who are sacrificing their lives to serve the heroic cause of peacekeeping. Tanzania,

with other countries, has been contributing troops to several United Nations peacekeeping missions. We have paid a high price through the loss of peacekeepers serving in different missions. It is only this week that Tanzania lost a soldier in the Democratic Republic of the Congo following an attack by the rebels of the Allied Democratic Forces. We condemn that cowardly act in the strongest possible terms.

Nonetheless, Tanzania remains steadfast and committed to contributing troops to United Nations peacekeeping missions. At the same time, we urge the Security Council to continue strengthening the operational capability of the Force Intervention Brigade in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo so that it can effectively deal with negative forces and asymmetrical warfare, which are manifesting in different war theatres in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Tanzania has maintained its record as a peaceful country upholding the rule of law, democracy and other principles of good governance. It has been a country of refuge for many decades. At the same time, Tanzania has been actively participating in regional and international peace initiatives, including the ongoing Burundi peace process, which has been supervised by the East African Community, facilitated by the former President of Tanzania, Mr. Benjamin William Mkapa, and mediated by His Excellency President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda. The peace talks are still on track, although their pace is slow and halting. It is encouraging to note that in some parts of Burundi, the security situation has significantly improved to permit the voluntary return of some 12,000 refugees of the almost 250,000 refugees who have been in Tanzania since 2015. We appreciate the partnership we have had with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in protecting and assisting the refugees in our country.

Tanzania has also for decades been receiving and hosting refugees from pockets of troubled areas in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We trust that there will be full implementation of the 31 December 2016 peace agreement, with the promise of timely elections in that country. We urge the leadership of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to live up to that commitment and to issue an election calendar soon. In that connection, we urge the international community to extend both logistical and financial support to the Democratic Republic of the Congo so that it can complete the registration of voters and expeditiously carry out the planned elections.

On the agenda of the General Assembly and the Security Council, there are two protracted problems that require decisive action. One is the issue of the self-determination of the Sahrawi people. With the return of Morocco into the African Union fold, expectations are high in Africa that negotiations on that issue, which is on the agenda of the Security Council, will receive renewed momentum and urgency.

On Palestine, we support the two-State solution—two States living side by side in peaceful coexistence. To that end, the elements of a viable State of Palestine must be ensured and respected. The long-stalled peace process in the Middle East must be rekindled with a series of acceptable confidence-building measures by both sides with the support and guarantee of the United Nations and the international community in its entirety.

In the Assembly, we have been calling for the cessation of economic, commercial, fmancial and other embargoes imposed on Cuba, without significant results. The intention of the United States to reverse the agreements between the two countries on normalizing relations is a setback to the progress that had been registered and applauded by all of us in the Assembly and beyond. Tanzania continues to call for the total removal of all embargoes on Cuba. The people-to-people contact that has started between the peoples of both Cuba and the United States should serve as building blocks for enduring peaceful good-neighbourliness in the spirit of dialogue and understanding.

After the end of the Cold War, there was a new dawn and bright prospects for both conventional and nuclear disarmament. The doctrine of nuclear deterrence was becoming obsolete, negotiations for the reduction of nuclear arsenals were making progress towards a nuclear ban treaty, including nuclear testing, and some aspirants to nuclear weapons abandoned their ambitions.

However, the recent developments in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea have shattered these optimistic prospects. The world is being dragged back to nuclear brinkmanship. This is the most recent threat to international peace and security. Tanzania supports all relevant resolutions of the Security Council on the nuclear-weapons trends in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and calls for de-escalation of the

political warfare and propaganda, and for the renewal of dialogue under the auspices of the Six-Party Talks.

On the other hand, Tanzania commends the recent adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which puts nuclear weapons on the same legal ground as other weapons of mass destruction. We should all support the Treaty in order to increase our moral authority in the fight against nuclear-weapons proliferation.

The reforms of the United Nations to make the Organization more efficient and relevant in order to cope with new trends and challenges must be continuous and progressive. The latest initiative of the Secretary-General is a commendable effort that should have received consensual support from the entire United Nations membership. We hope that, in the process of implementing these latest reform proposals, the debates will be all-inclusive and progress will be made on the basis of consensus among the entire membership of the United Nations.

The delay in Security Council reform is indeed testing the political will of the key players on this serious matter, and the debate has now become routine and sterile. The status quo is undercutting the primary responsibility of the Council for the maintenance of international peace and security. Democratizing the Security Council is good for the Council and for the world in the twenty-first century.

In conclusion, I wish to return to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by making a clarion call to the United Nations and its Member States to implement the goals contained therein, in measured and agreed benchmarks and intervals. The economic and social benefits of well-implemented goals will enhance democracy, freedom and security at the national, regional and international levels, leaving no one behind.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Mark Anthony Brantley, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Aviation of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

Mr. Brantley (Saint Kitts and Nevis): I bring greetings from the Government and the people of the Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis. I wish at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and to assure you of my delegation's full support as you carry out your duties.

Permit me also to extend congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson, President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. President Thomson ably steered the deliberations on many pressing matters during this past year. As a representative of Fiji, he proved once again that small island nations continue to make significant contributions to matters of global relevance.

I also extend a warm welcome to Secretary-General Guterres as he assumes leadership of the Organization. His Excellency has come to the helm at a critical time in our collective history, and we are confident that his competence, coupled with his political and diplomatic experience, will enable him to chart the course of the Organization towards a sustainable and peaceful future for all. I assure His Excellency of my Government's fullest support and commitment.

My delegation also expresses appreciation to former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his sterling service and wishes him well in his future endeavours.

The world has gathered here in New York at the seventy-second session of the General Assembly under the theme "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet". The theme is comprehensive, yet simple; concise, yet inclusive; and it encompasses pivotal and pertinent areas for international reflection at this critical juncture in our history.

Permit me to begin where the theme ends — a sustainable planet. I choose to do so because of the experience that I and members of our Caribbean civilization had immediately prior to leaving our countries to attend this session of the General Assembly. In the space of two weeks, we braced ourselves for the three hurricanes Irma, Jose and Maria. Two of these, Irma and Maria, descended on our region as category 5 hurricanes and, in the case of Irma, as the most powerful storm in recorded history in the Atlantic. I pause to reflect on the fact that the hurricane season of 2017 is not yet over and that the Caribbean will face similar threats each and every year.

In the aftermath, we were faced with the tragic destruction of life, property and infrastructure in Antigua and Barbuda, Anguilla, Saint Barthélemy, Saint Martin, Sint Maarten, the British Virgin Islands, the United States Virgin Islands, Cuba, the Turks and Caicos islands, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Guadeloupe and Dominica. Irma then made landfall

in Florida in the United States, where, like Hurricane Harvey before it in Texas and Louisiana, millions of people were subject to damage and destruction.

I have highlighted the various countries and territories that suffered the most devastation, but my own beloved country of Saint Kitts and Nevis was not without injury. We, too, saw damage to our power grid, our roads, our agriculture and fisheries sector and to the homes of our people. Indeed, on 19 September, the day we should have been celebrating the thirty-fourth anniversary of our independence as a nation, Saint Kitts and Nevis was locked down under assault from Hurricane Maria.

The carnage in a wide swath of the Caribbean is unimaginable. Lives have been lost, homes and infrastructure destroyed, economies reduced to tatters, and years of development wiped out; in the case of Barbuda, an entire island was evacuated and rendered uninhabited and uninhabitable for the first time in 300 years. It is worthy of note that the carnage caused by Hurricanes Irma and Maria took but a few days. In just a few days and in many countries a mere few hours, the world had front-row seats to the most horrific destruction ever seen in our beloved Caribbean region.

We have in this Hall heard the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda speak solemnly of the utter destruction of Barbuda (see A/72/PV.14). It was only today that we stood in anguished silence as the Prime Minister of Dominica recounted the near total destruction of his beautiful country and the tragic loss of life (see A/72/PV.19). Their first-hand accounts would move even the coldest hearts to tears.

We today extend our deep condolences to our brothers and sisters and continue to keep them in our prayers. But even as we do so, we also remember the victims of the three horrific earthquakes in Mexico and those in Japan and New Zealand. Our thoughts and prayers are also with the Governments and the peoples of those countries.

The time has now come for the world to treat these phenomena not as natural disasters but as the man-made disasters that they are. The science is irrefutable. Our oceans continue to get warmer due to our continued abuse of our planet Earth. Warmer oceans feed and create horrific storms such as Irma and Maria. Now more than ever, we bear witness to the compelling need to support the call for a reduction in greenhouse-gas emissions and all other actions and behaviours that aggravate the effects of climate change.

Climate change for us in the Caribbean is not a matter for academic rumination. The humanitarian crisis unfolding in the Caribbean in the wake of Hurricanes Irma and Maria is stark testimony to the fact that climate change is not only real but poses an existential threat to our peoples, our countries and our civilization. The world has deliberated and negotiated. We have made commitments and signed multiple agreements, most recently the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, but the time for more urgent, concrete, tangible and collective action is now.

It is the most cruel irony of our times that we in the Caribbean, who are least responsible for climate change, are the ones most disastrously affected by it. We are not major polluters, but we bear the brunt of the effects of pollution. In every sense, small vulnerable States like Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica and my own Saint Kitts and Nevis continue to be asked by the world to cash a cheque we did not write. In order to attain a sustainable planet, those most responsible for climate change through their greenhouse gas emissions and other environmentally harmful practices must shoulder the responsibility of arresting and ameliorating the consequences. We cannot continue to abuse our planet and expect to remain unscathed.

The people of Saint Kitts and Nevis call upon the global community to pledge itself to pursue renewable energy with greater alacrity. We must invest in better and stronger homes and buildings. We must grow our economies to allow us greater financial resilience and flexibility. The people of Saint Kitts and Nevis and of our Caribbean deserve and demand the same fundamental right to life and security of our way of life as others anywhere else. I ask the global community to lend its collective voice so that together we can create a glorious symphony for change — change that will ensure a sustainable planet for all. In this regard, I call on the community of nations to mobilize the resources necessary to ensure the speedy reconstruction of those countries devastated by Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

My delegation unreservedly condemns the sterile analysis of gross domestic product per capita, which has been used by international agencies to tell our small island developing States that we are now middle- and high-income countries and therefore locked out of accessing development assistance or affordable

financing. It is a travesty and a tragedy for the world community to witness such destruction caused by forces entirely outside the control of Caribbean nations and then refuse to allow those very nations access to the resources necessary to rebuild. There has to be a more sensible and just model that takes into account the special vulnerability of small island States.

Saint Kitts and Nevis therefore joins others in demanding that a vulnerability index be developed as part of the matrix for accessing development assistance. We of the Caribbean, already caught in the debt trap, cannot be forced to borrow commercially at high interest rates to rebuild destroyed lives after each disaster. This is and must be a moral imperative for us all in the wake of the destruction seen in the Caribbean.

And rebuild we must. Countries such as Dominica have no safe zones or other geographic areas to which populations can be relocated. A hurricane of the scale of Irma and Maria devastates entire countries. We of the Caribbean are a proud and resilient people. The world must not stand by and allow the evils of climate change to force Caribbean people to become climate refugees. We must rebuild, and we require the community of nations to partner with us in this rebuilding effort.

In the fight against the disastrous effects of climate change, allow me to commend the work of many international agencies and organizations, as well as non-governmental actors. My country is especially heartened by the work being undertaken by the Commonwealth and its leadership. It follows that if we are to achieve a sustainable planet, it requires an all-hands-on-deck approach. From the onset, there must be buy-in from all stakeholders. No one should be left out, and therefore this calls for inclusiveness, unity and appreciation of the input and contributions that all can make to achieving the world we want.

This brings me to the first part of our theme — focusing on people. There can be no debate that our people are our primary resource. It is no marvel, therefore, that Governments allocate a large percentage of their budgets to developing their human capital and expend great effort to ensure that they meet the basic needs of their populace. Governments that fail to provide for their people and that ill-treat, abuse and oppress their people must be rightly ostracized by the international community.

Our world comprises all kinds of people, but I wish to highlight the youth — a sector of all our populations on which the global community must increase its focus. I commend the United Nations on its unflinching efforts to draw attention to our youth. Indeed, it was more than two decades ago that the General Assembly adopted the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond.

Young people constitute 18 per cent of the global population. Young people and children together account for nearly 40 per cent of the world's population. Young people are not just our future; they are our present. Globally, Governments must do all they can to provide institutions and opportunities for learning and development, create employment and prepare young people for and steer them towards entrepreneurial endeavours. But Governments cannot do it alone. We therefore use this forum to call upon the business community, as well as non-governmental agencies and actors, to provide our young people with viable options and opportunities for gainful employment and social and economic advancement. We cannot speak of attaining the Sustainable Development Goals without a focus on our youth.

A vital element of a sustainable planet is peace. It behoves us all, nations great and small, to work towards the achievement of that essential universal value. Regrettably, while in some countries citizens are forced to engage in a daily struggle for survival, braving the scorching sun and bitter cold to labour for less than $1 per day, other countries are expending billions of dollars on developing weapons of war and mass destruction. While some Governments are allocating large sums to secure a future for their women and young people, others are investing in tools of war. While the budgets alone of some Governments will be inadequate to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, others are using multiple times those budgets in developing nuclear warheads. In order to attain a sustainable planet, our priorities must be synchronized, harmonized and synergized. Our goal must be the preservation and conservation not only of our natural resources, but also of our human resources.

My delegation condemns unreservedly the actions that have led to heightened tensions on the Korean peninsula and calls on all countries to respect and honour their solemn commitments under international law. We condemn all actions that encourage violence and disrupt peace. There can be no place in today's world for war and violence. We therefore join the

international community in demanding diplomacy and dialogue instead of sabre-rattling and warmongering.

Saint Kitts and Nevis stands proudly with our Caribbean and Latin American neighbours as a zone of peace and exhorts all members of the community of nations to expend every effort to create and promote peace.

The theme of the current session makes a clarion call not only to strive for peace, but also to strive for a decent life for all. No boy, no girl, no man, no woman, no person should be left behind. We must work together to reduce poverty and hunger, promote justice and equality, and ensure that our people have access to health care and economic opportunity. In that global effort, we must be inclusive and each and every country must be allowed to play its part. No one nation can do it alone. Human suffering anywhere is human suffering everywhere. We must build partnerships and ensure the contribution of all the populations of our planet Earth. All must be allowed to sit at the table of brotherhood and contribute to finding lasting solutions to the problems that we face.

In that regard, we call on the international community yet again to look at our dear friend, Taiwan — a modern country of 23 million people that has had tremendous successes in technology, agriculture, health, and renewable energy; a country that is a model of peace and security. Saint Kitts and Nevis has experienced first-hand the benefits of partnership with Taiwan. There is much that it can offer, and we lose collectively when we seek to isolate and prevent our fellow nations from having a seat at the international table. Saint Kitts and Nevis continues its unwavering support for the Government and the people of the Republic of China on Taiwan to be included in the United Nations and other international agencies. There is much that we can learn from Taiwan, and we can no longer afford to ignore the voices of its 23 million people.

In equal measure, we call yet again for the lifting of the more than 50-year embargo against our Caribbean sister Cuba. The Cuban people are a noble people who have demonstrated their resilience despite insurmountable odds. Their leadership in health and humanitarian assistance to Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America is well known. The Cuban people ask only to be given a fair chance to live their lives in dignity and peace.

In closing, I acknowledge that the task ahead of navigating the many complex issues of the international community will not be easy. However, we remain firm believers in collective strength and collective effort. The journey to a sustainable planet and a future for all is attainable. Throughout history, we have achieved more together than we have ever achieved alone. Whether we are small islands; land-locked, mountainous, desert or ice-capped States; whether we are super-Powers or powerless, we are all better and the United Nations becomes a better Organization when we work together. Alone we can do little, but together we can achieve much.

The challenges that we face globally — from climate change to refugees to war and violence — require urgent action now. The world does not have the luxury of time. We have talked. We have debated. We have postulated and hypothesized. We have studied and analysed. We must now act. In that regard, I can find no more elegant prose than that of American civil-rights leader, Martin Luther King, Jr., who said:

> "We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there is such a thing as being too late. This is no time for apathy or complacency. This is a time for vigorous and positive action."

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first statement and to five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Al-Khalifa (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to speak in exercise of the right of reply in response to the statements delivered by the representatives of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain.

Both delegations accused Qatar of terrorism. Qatar has an excellent record in counter-terrorism and ranks high in that regard. Such allegations allude to a link between Qatar and terrorism. Those claims are false, baseless and part of the unlawful campaign against Qatar that started with hacking and piracy. Other Member States took similar steps against Qatar and resorted to religious rhetoric to back their claims.

Those countries are now frustrated and use commercial means to pressure Qatar.

In response to the statement of Saudi Arabia, I affirm that the State of Qatar has spared no effort in strengthening international action against terrorism. We are a principled member of various counter-terrorism forums and coalitions, including the Global Coalition against Da'esh and the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum. Qatar participated in a summit between Islamic countries and the United States of America and was among the first countries to implement the outcomes of that summit. We have also signed a memorandum of understanding with the United States to stop funding terrorism.

We tell those countries that accuse Qatar of supporting terrorism that they ought to follow our example. The State of Qatar has fully implemented the relevant Security Council resolutions. Our record has been commended in a number of United Nations reports, which stress the constructive role that Qatar is playing to support the United Nations in sustaining peace and providing humanitarian and development assistance, which promotes stability and contributes to eradicating terrorism.

The statement delivered by the representative of Bahrain included a number of contradictions. It is truly surprising to hear the representative of Bahrain, who used to commend Qatar, now turn to criticizing it. Bahrain's experience affects the stability of the entire region. We reject the claims made in Bahrain's statement, which are refuted by our excellent record and our commitment to the Charter of the United Nations and stability in our region.

It is very surprising to hear Bahrain accuse us of terrorism. We call on the Kingdom of Bahrain to work tirelessly to overcome its own internal problems. To that end, it should respect human rights and implement United Nations resolutions. It should also refrain from marginalizing sectors of its own population and flouting the rule of law. It needs to be very objective in dealing with its own internal problems. Fabricating problems and conflict with the State of Qatar to obscure its own domestic problems will not yield positive results.

The illegal steps taken against Qatar are unacceptable. Is it conceivable or reasonable to prevent students from attending to their studies? Is that not a violation of their human rights? The same might be asked of legislation that threatens citizens with punishment simply for expressing their sympathy with Qatar? Such rhetoric fuels the campaign against Qatar. How can counter-terrorism succeed when we fuel such rhetoric?

Ms. Lodhi (Pakistan): I take the floor to exercise Pakistan's right of reply to a statement in the general debate earlier today (A/72/PV.19) in which the Foreign Minister of India indulged in an orgy of slander against my country. Her comments towards Pakistan betrayed the hostility of the Indian leadership towards Pakistan — hostility that we have endured for 70 long years. Repeating falsehoods year after year does not and cannot conceal or alter the truth.

But in her vitriol, India's Foreign Minister deliberately ignored the core issue of Jammu and Kashmir. Let me be clear. Jammu and Kashmir is not a part of India. It is recognized by the United Nations and the international community as disputed territory. I invite the Assembly and the Indian Foreign Minister to look at the United Nations maps. Therefore, India's military occupation of the state is illegal. The Security Council has, in more than a dozen resolutions, decided that the dispute must be resolved by enabling the people of Jammu and Kashmir to determine their own destiny through a United Nations-supervised plebiscite.

India accepted these United Nations resolutions, but has avoided implementing them through obfuscation, diversion, deceit and aggression. India's brutal occupation of Kashmir has killed more than 100,000 innocent Kashmiri children, women and men. Today this campaign of brutality continues, including the shooting and blinding of innocent Kashmiri children with pellet guns. Yet every day these Kashmiri children, women and youth come out on the streets to demand that India get out of occupied Kashmir.

India cannot hide behind semantics. Any inter-State dispute like that surrounding Kashmir is by definition an international dispute. If the parties fail to resolve a dispute, the United Nations and the international community have not only the right but the obligation to intervene and help resolve the dispute. In the case of Jammu and Kashmir, that obligation is explicit since the Security Council has been involved with this dispute since its very inception and has prescribed very specifically and precisely how the dispute should be resolved.

Security Council resolutions do not lapse with time, nor are they "overtaken", as the Indian Foreign

Minister put it. Law has no expiry date and morality has no sell-by date. India's posture is that of the predator. It cannot escape its legal and moral obligation to abide by the resolutions of the Security Council. Any other interpretation will open the door to the logic of force in international relations.

India now also refuses a bilateral dialogue with Pakistan, whether composite or comprehensive. The condition it imposes that first there must be an end to violence begs the question. Violence emanates first and foremost from India's occupation and brutal suppression of the people of Kashmir. Under the circumstances, my Prime Minister has proposed that the Secretary-General appoint a special representative or special envoy, as several of his predecessors did, to promote the implementation of relevant provisions of the Security Council resolutions.

At the same time, the United Nations should also take steps to investigate India's ongoing and massive violations of human rights in Kashmir and the impunity enjoyed by India's security forces, lift the draconian emergency laws and punish those responsible for the war crimes and genocide in Kashmir. If the international community wishes to avoid a dangerous escalation between India and Pakistan, it must call on India to halt its provocations and aggressive actions. It must end the ceasefire violations along the Line of Control. It must halt its sponsorship of terrorist groups inside Pakistan.

India's Foreign Minister has spoken much about terrorism. The United Nations should actually define terrorism, and in that definition we should include State terrorism. The Indian National Security Advisor has boasted how this State terrorism is being sponsored by India's spy agencies in my country, in what he has called a "double-squeeze strategy".

Pakistan has in its custody an Indian spy and intelligence officer, Kulbhushan Jadhav, who has confessed to India's support of terrorist activities in my country. In fact, India has considerable experience in the State sponsorship of terrorism in our region. It has sponsored and perpetrated terrorism and aggression against all its neighbours, creating terrorist groups, destabilizing and blockading neighbours to do its strategic building, and sponsoring subversion, sabotage and terrorism in various parts of Pakistan. All this establishes the fact that India is the mother of terrorism in South Asia.

India's proclivity for violence is also no secret. In the 70 years since its independence, India has been engaged in at least a dozen-plus instances of the use of force and continues to face 17 insurgencies in its own land. It has fought a war with or within each of its neighbours. The Indian Foreign Minister sought to denigrate my country's founding father, the Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. All I can say about India's current political luminaries is that they belong to a political organization that has the blood of thousands of Muslims of Gujarat on their hands. Today, that so-called democracy is the world's largest hypocrisy. That is the face of India's democracy.

India is ruled by a Government in which a racist and fascist ideology is firmly embedded. The leadership of this Government emanates from the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sang, the same extremist group accused of assassinating Mahatma Gandhi. It is a Government that has appointed a fanatic as the Chief Minister of India's largest state, whose rallying cry to his mobs was: "If they kill even one Hindu, we will kill 100 Muslims". It is a Government that has allowed the lynching of Muslims.

All this is amply documented by international human rights organizations. Indeed, as one of India's most famous contemporary authors recently said,

> "These horrific murders are only a symptom of a deeper malaise. Life is hell for the living too. Whole populations — millions of Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims and Christians — are being forced to live in terror, unsure of when and from where the assault will come", [and that] "[m]uch of what is in the air in India now is pure terror, in Kashmir, in other places".

The Indian Foreign Minister spoke about human rights, so let me ask: who is using pellet guns that are blinding unarmed protesters, including children and infants, in occupied Kashmir? Who is violating the fundamental rights, not only of the brave people of Kashmir, but of hundreds of millions of Indians? Who is using rape as an instrument of terror and of State policy to crush a popular and indigenous movement in the occupied state of Jammu and Kashmir?

In conclusion, let me say that Pakistan remains open to resuming a comprehensive dialogue with India to address all outstanding issues, especially that of Jammu and Kashmir, and to discuss measures to maintain peace and security. But this dialogue must

be accompanied by an end to India's campaign of subversion and State-sponsored terrorism in Pakistan.

Ms. Mohamed (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): In response to the Qatari allegations, I assert that the Kingdom of Bahrain and its brethren in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt — supported by several other countries — have exercised their sovereign right, in accordance with international law, to impose measures against Qatar, which violated an accord that, when violated in part, is considered to have been violated as a whole. The Kingdom of Bahrain has evidence that the State of Qatar violated that agreement and interfered in the internal affairs of the Kingdom in order to foment chaos and overturn our domestic rulings. Qatar is also threatening the social fabric of Bahrain by according Qatari nationality to many Bahraini families.

Since the boycott was first imposed by our four countries, Qatar has spread false allegations that we are violating the human rights of our citizens, although Qatar knows that the four countries, including the Kingdom of Bahrain, have taken measures to ensure that all humanitarian cases — whether with respect to education, health care or any other urgent matter — are given due consideration. The measures taken by our four countries are sovereign matters. Any country has the right to do so under international law.

If we are to talk about contradictions, Qatar refutes its own allegations about the boycott by claiming that it is not impacted thereby, that it is enjoying economic growth and other similar claims. That is Qatar's right, but it should not behave one way and then act in an entirely contradictory fashion. Qatar is seeking to exploit international forums for its own political interests.

The Kingdom of Bahrain has suffered a great deal under the policies of Qatar, which spurns good-neighbourliness despite our family ties. However, the State of Qatar has sought and continues to seek to foment chaos and instability in Bahrain by supporting militias and terrorist groups, either through espionage, financing or its media, which it has exploited especially since 2011 in order to spread false news and create chaos in Bahrain through more than 800 falsified broadcasts. It is hiding behind freedom of expression and freedom of the media, well aware that the Kingdom of Bahrain has a long-standing record of respect for freedom of the media. We have a democratic system and a fully elected Parliament that, thanks to recent amendments, is able to carry out all its functions.

No such achievements exist in the State of Qatar. Its Constitution is riddled with flaws. It does not have a Parliament. We are not trying to compare Bahrain and Qatar. This is an internal affair and, unlike Qatar, we do not interfere in the internal affairs of others. We wish the people of Qatar well, but we believe that reform is part of the democratic process. We remind our brethren in Qatar that it is easy to accuse others, but they should first look to themselves before looking at others.

Mr. Al-Khalifa (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): We regret that Bahrain has attacked Qatar. Its allegations against us are false. Unjust measures have been taken against Qatar, in violation of human rights, freedom of expression and the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which is based on respect for human rights. One cannot counter terrorism without respecting human rights.

We have been accused of funding terrorism, but there is no substantiated evidence for these claims. These four countries have provided no evidence because there is no such evidence. Qatar is better than all four countries combined in the field of counter-terrorism. The boycott, of which Bahrain is a part, has led to violations of human rights, such as the separation of families. Some countries have even enacted laws to prosecute citizens who express their sympathy for Qatar.

Any allegation that Qatar has intervened and interfered in the internal affairs of these four countries is false and intended to obscure the fact that those four countries are interfering in our internal affairs and have launched campaigns that threaten the unity of the Qatari people. Against this background, we have advised these four countries to pay greater attention to their own unity and their own respect for human rights. Respect for human rights is the only guarantee for the stability of countries. To ensure the stability of the Gulf, we need cooperation among the Gulf States.

As we are not able to speak a third time in exercise of the right of reply, we shall submit further comments in writing.

The meeting rose at 8 p.m.